NewsRelease

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

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Aerospace society names Hampton center an historic site

The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) has selected the NACA Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory for a 2001 Historic Aerospace Site award. The NACA laboratory is the predecessor of today's NASA Langley Research Center and opened in Hampton, Va., in 1917.

A ceremony at 1 p.m. Friday, April 26, at NASA Langley's Reid Conference Center will celebrate the recognition. Massachusetts Institute of Technology curator of science and technology, Dr. Deborah Douglas, will be keynote speaker. Dr. Douglas will present "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants" that will highlight the unique contributions the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) Hampton site made to the nation. The author of *United States Women in Aviation*, Douglas was the visiting historian at NASA Langley Research Center from 1994 to 1999.

The NACA was established by Congress in 1915 largely in response to the growing dominance of European aircraft. One of its first steps toward regaining air superiority was to establish a research center for aviation. NACA Langley's mission was forthright: to find practical solutions to the problems of flight.

The Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory had a proud history and a long list of technological firsts. Langley hired and trained generations of aeronautical engineers, technicians, managers and leaders, and, in the process, helped establish the nation's aeronautical infrastructure. From Langley came a group of people who broke technological barriers, created an inventory of aeronautical research tools, helped set up the country's aviation industry, contributed to the establishment of aeronautical departments at universities throughout the nation, and worked to create five of NASA's current field centers located across the country.

Langley's early focus was aviation. But the minds and talents of the laboratory's workforce were challenged anew -- first by jet propulsion and supersonic flight in the '40s, then by spaceflight in the '50s. Langley achieved major breakthroughs in all areas. Its researchers and test pilots helped break the sound barrier at Edwards Air Force Base. Other Langley researchers were instrumental in designing the Mercury space capsule, setting the stage for the laboratory's leadership role in the space program.

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With the establishment of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1958, the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory became NASA's Langley Research Center.

The AIAA will recognize the early Langley accomplishments with a bronze plaque that will be presented to the current Langley Director April 26.

NOTE TO EDITORS: NACA personnel who helped define the early aeronautical infrastructure will be available for interview following the event. Reporters who wish interviews should contact Marny Skora at 757-864-6124 or by e-mail at m.m.skora@larc.nasa.gov for credentials and Center access.

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